

## COMBINATION SEAT CUSHION AND TOTE BAG

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application 60/501,224 filed September 8, 2003.

5

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to a portable seat cushion used at arena events. More particularly, the present invention relates to a combination seat cushion and tote bag capable of storing items and providing a cushion for a seat or bench.

10

#### 2. Discussion of the Prior Art

Seat cushions have long been used at events taking place in an arena in which seating is provided by relatively hard, uncushioned benches or seats. Such an arena is often a host to sporting and other events that last for several hours. Uncushioned benches and seats may cause discomfort, such as lower back pain, when a spectator sits for such long periods of time. As a result, generally lightweight, portable seat cushions have been in use to provide cushioning for otherwise uncushioned benches or seats. Such cushions are also used in other activities, such as recreational activities, to provide cushioning where none is provided.

15

Attendance at events held in arenas, and participation in recreational activities often times requires that a person carrying items for selective use, such as umbrellas, ponchos, sun tan lotion, hats, etc. Tote bags are commonly used for the carriage of such items. In today's post 9/11 environment, security at events attended by relatively large numbers of people is becoming an increasing concern. As a result, sponsors and government officials associated with most events held at arenas, or other large gathering facilities, require tote bags to be searched prior to a person gaining entry into the facility.

20

The present invention addresses the need to provide a device in a new and useful manner capable of acting as a seat cushion while permitting the carriage of personal items for use at an event or activity. In addition, the present invention addresses the need to provide

a tote bag that enables relatively quick and easy visual access to the contents of the bag for decreasing the amount of time required for an adequate search of the contents.

## 5 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A combination seat cushion and tote bag device constructed in accordance with the present invention broadly comprises a seat cushion portion and a tote bag portion. The seat cushion portion includes a padded cushion and a flexible outer covering surrounding the cushion. The outer covering presents front, back and opposed side faces. Each face 10 includes opposed upper and lower edges. The covering also presents upper and lower faces.

The tote bag portion includes front, back, bottom and opposed side panels defining a storage pouch for storing various items. The front and back panels each include a top edge. A zipper is provided along the top edge of the front and back panels as a coupling structure for coupling the front and back panels for selective opening and closing of the pouch. The 15 panels of the pouch are constructed from a generally transparent, flexible material to permit viewing of the items stored in the pouch from a position outside the pouch. The side and bottom panels of the pouch are biased towards a folded position resulting in the pouch being generally flat when empty, but permitting expansion as items are added to the pouch.

The tote bag portion is coupled with and depends from the front face of the outer 20 covering by an intermediate panel. A shoulder strap and a carrying handle are mounted on the intermediate panel for carrying the device. In a carrying configuration, the tote bag portion rests against the lower face of the seat cushion portion for compactness while transporting the device. In a use configuration, the seat cushion portion rests on a bench or seat with the front face positioned towards the front of the bench or seat, and the tote bag portion hangs from the 25 front of the bench or seat. As a result, items stored in the pouch are readily accessible.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of a combination seat cushion and tote bag device is described in detail below with reference to the drawing figures, wherein:

5 Figure 1 is a perspective view in partial cutaway of a combination seat cushion and tote bag constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the device of Fig. 1 in a folded configuration;

Fig. 3 is a fragmentary bottom view of the device showing a lower face of the seat cushion portion of the device; and

10 Fig. 4 is a fragmentary side view of the device showing the seat cushion portion strapped to a bench.

Fig. 5 is a rear plan view of the device showing the device attached to a bench.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

15 Referring now to the drawings, Figure 1 depicts a combination seat cushion and tote bag device 10 constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The device 10 broadly comprises a seat cushion portion 12 and a tote bag portion 14. The seat cushion portion 12 includes a padded cushion 16 and an outer covering 18 surrounding the cushion 16. The outer covering 18 presents a front face 20 having an upper edge 22 and a lower edge 24 and a back face 21. The covering 18 also presents an upper 20 edge 26 and a lower face 28 (see Fig. 3).

25 The padded cushion 16 is constructed from closed-cell foam or other suitable padding material. The outer covering 18 is constructed from a flexible, durable and relatively water-resistant material, such as nylon or vinyl. A cover zipper 30 is provided along the back face 21 to permit opening and closing of the covering 18, in order to allow selective removal of the cushion 16 for cleaning or replacement.

The tote bag portion 14 of the device 10 includes a front panel 32, a back panel 34, opposed side panels 36, 37 and a bottom panel 38 defining a storage pouch 39 for storing various items. The front and back panels 32, 34 each present a top edge. A zipper 40 is

attached along the top edge of the front and back panels 32, 34 as a coupling structure for coupling the front and back panels 32, 34 for selective opening and closing of the pouch 39. The pouch zipper 40 extends beyond side panel 37 permitting the pouch 39 to open more fully when the zipper 40 is unzipped, providing improved access to the interior, and thus the 5 contents, of the pouch 39.

The panels 32, 34, 36, 37 and 38 of the pouch 39 are constructed from a generally transparent, flexible material to permit viewing of the items stored in the pouch 39 from a position outside the pouch 39. In preferred device 10, the panels 32, 34, 36, 37 and 38 are constructed from polyvinyl chloride (PVC). As a result, when the device 10 is used to carry 10 personal items to an event having security, the items may be quickly and easily checked by security personnel without having to open the pouch 39, thereby decreasing the time required to confirm that prohibited items are not in the pouch 39.

The side and bottom panels 36, 37 and 38 of the pouch 39 are biased towards a folded position. Therefore, the pouch 39 is generally flat when empty, but permits expansion 15 as items are added to the pouch 39.

An intermediate panel 42 includes a first edge that is attached to the lower edge 24 of the front face 20 of the covering 18 and a second edge that is attached to the back panel 34 of the pouch 39, coupling the tote bag portion 14 with the seat cushion portion 12. The intermediate panel 42 permits the tote bag portion 14 to depend freely from the seat cushion 20 portion 12 so that when the seat cushion portion 12 is held in a generally vertical orientation, the tote bag portion 14 rests against the lower face 28 and when the seat cushion portion 12 is held in a generally horizontal orientation, the tote bag portion 14 hangs vertically with the openable top portion of the pouch 39 oriented upwardly.

The pouch 39 also includes open ended, storage pockets 44, 46 for assistance in 25 organizing the contents of the pouch 39. The pockets 44, 46 are constructed from a generally transparent material permitting the viewing of items stored in the pockets 44, 46 from a position outside the pouch 39.

A detachable, adjustable shoulder strap 48 is mounted on the intermediate panel 42 for carrying the device 10 over a person's shoulder. In addition, a handle 50 is affixed to the

intermediate panel 42 for alternatively carrying the device 10 by hand. When the device 10 is carried over the shoulder or by hand, the seat cushion portion 12 and the tote bag portion 14 are naturally in a generally vertical orientation wherein the portion 12, 14 are folded together for compactness. The pouch 39 may also be accessed while being carried over the 5 shoulder or by hand, permitting the tote bag portion 14 to be used as a carry-all, thereby increasing the utility of the device 10.

Referring now to Fig. 4, an adjustable, seat cushion securing strap 52 is positioned adjacent to the lower face 28 of the covering 18 for securing the seat cushion portion 12, and thus the device 10, to a bench 54 or seat. A first end 56 of the strap 52 is attached to the 10 lower face 28 adjacent to the back face 21 of the covering 18. A second end 58 of the strap 52 is attached to the intermediate panel 42. The strap 52 further includes a clasp 60 for opening and closing the strap 52 to permit attachment to an elongated structure, such as the bench 54, over which the strap 52 may not be easily slipped.

The device 10 is prepared for attachment to the bench 54, or other seat, by being held 15 in a generally horizontal orientation so that the tote bag portion 14 hangs generally vertically and the clasp 60 is decoupled, opening the strap 52. The seat cushion portion 12 is then placed on the bench 54 in a desired location and the strap 52 is wrapped about the bottom of the bench 54. The clasp 60 is recoupled, and the strap 52 is adjusted for sufficient snugness to secure the seat portion 12 to the bench 54.

20 When secured to the bench 54, the pouch 39 of the tote bag portion 14 is readily accessible for manipulation or selective use of the items therein. The pouch zipper 40 may is used to selectively open and close the pouch 39.

After the event or activity being attended is concluded, the device 10 is easily removed 25 from the bench 54 by decoupling the clasp 60 and lifting the device 10 from the bench 54. The clasp 60 is then recoupled and the strap 52 adjusted for proper length during use as a tote bag. The device 60 is capable of being carried over the shoulder using the shoulder strap 48 or by hand using the handle 50.

A removable sign (not shown) bearing indicia may be inserted into the pouch 39 so that the indicia may be seen through the front panel 32 of the pouch 39. Many events that are

attended where the seating is provided by relatively hard benches or seats are sporting events, such as football, baseball and auto racing. Fans of such events often choose to wear T-shirts, sweat shirts and other clothing items bearing their favorite team's logo. Such fans may be fans of multiple sports, and thus multiple teams. As a result, such a fan would have 5 to purchase duplicative clothing items in order to be appropriately dressed for different events in order to show support for the team participating in the relevant event.

By utilizing a removable sign inserted into the pouch 39, a fan may use the device 10 to show support for a particular team, and then remove the sign and replace it with another sign at a different event to show support for a different team. For example, a fan of both 10 baseball and football, may use two signs, one for his or her favorite team in each sport with a single device 10. The signs may be economically produced using cardboard, so that multiple signs may be purchased and used with one device 10. The result is improved economic efficiency in showing support for multiple teams.

Although the invention has been described in the above preferred embodiment with 15 reference to the drawing figures, it is understood that substitutions may be made and equivalents employed herein with departing from the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.